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Report of the Secretary-General on Ethiopia and Eritrea

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to paragraph 12 of Security Council resolution 1320 (2000) of 15 September 2000, provides an update on the peace process since my report dated 30 August 2005 (S/2005/553) and describes the activities of the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), the current mandate of which expires on 15 March 2006. Pursuant to paragraph 3 of Security Council resolution 1640 (2005) of 23 November 2005, it also reports on compliance by Ethiopia and Eritrea with the demands in paragraphs 1 and 2 of that resolution.

II. Status of the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas and cooperation with the parties

2. Since my last report to the Security Council, there has been a serious deterioration of the security and political situation in the UNMEE Mission area, in particular in and around the Temporary Security Zone, which has become increasingly tense and potentially volatile. This situation is a result of an accumulation of unresolved issues, in particular the stalemate in the demarcation process caused by Ethiopia's refusal to fully accept, without preconditions, the decision of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission of 13 April 2002; the forward deployment of Ethiopian troops since December 2004; violations of the Temporary Security Zone; and the increasing restrictions imposed on UNMEE by the Eritrean authorities, including a ban on all helicopter flights by UNMEE within Eritrean airspace. This action by the Government of Eritrea has severely reduced the Mission's capacity to implement its monitoring mandate as requested by the parties in the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities signed at Algiers on 18 June 2000 and authorized by the Security Council in its resolutions 1312 (2000) of 31 July 2000 and 1320 (2000).

3. In my letter addressed to the President of the Security Council dated 24 October 2005 (S/2005/668), I indicated that the Eritrean ban on UNMEE helicopter flights had seriously affected the security of UNMEE personnel and all operations of the Mission. UNMEE estimates that as a result of this ban, and other restrictions on United Nations ground patrols imposed by Eritrea, both outside and inside the Temporary Security Zone, the Mission has been able to monitor only 40

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per cent of the territory within its area of responsibility. In addition, 18 out of 40 UNMEE observation posts and deployment sites, primarily located in isolated areas, have had to be vacated because of the difficulty in maintaining them. The restrictions have also seriously reduced the Mission's ability to provide timely warning in case of a military build-up or infiltration of troops into or around the Temporary Security Zone by either side, despite all efforts to step up the UNMEE mobile patrols and increase the number of static checkpoints. Finally, and most importantly, without the capacity to undertake medical evacuation by air, the safety of peacekeepers was put at serious risk. Asmara also prohibited UNMEE night patrols and the use by UNMEE of track roads, and the movement of United Nations troops is routinely not allowed to proceed in many areas of the Zone. Despite my personal appeals and the demands by the Security Council, these unacceptable restrictions, which were introduced without any forewarning or explanation, remain in place.

4. Following the Eritrean ban on UNMEE helicopter flights, the Ethiopian Armed Forces increased its troop levels in areas close to the southern boundary of the Temporary Security Zone, which further heightened tension in the border areas. Ethiopia has also recalled reservists and ex-soldiers to active duty. Addis Ababa has maintained that the forward deployment of its troops was intended exclusively as a preventive measure against any possible "miscalculation" by Eritrea, which might result in the resumption of large-scale hostilities. In their movement to forward positions, on 18 November, the Ethiopian Armed Forces took up position at Peak 885, a site inside the Zone in sub-sector East that had been vacated by UNMEE the day before. Following formal protests lodged by UNMEE, the Ethiopian Armed Forces withdrew from this location on 23 November. Similarly, on 29 November, a few elements in the Ethiopian Armed Forces briefly entered the Zone in the area of Adi Melele, in Sector West. Until the adoption of resolution 1640 (2005), the Ethiopian Armed Forces had continued to actively reinforce and conduct military training and defensive preparations in areas adjacent to the southern boundary of the Zone. The Eritrean Defence Forces have undertaken considerable movement of troops in areas adjacent to the northern boundary of the Zone.

5. In view of the heightened tensions, Ambassador Kenzo Oshima of Japan, Chairman of the Working Group of the Security Council on Peacekeeping Operations, visited the region on behalf of the Council. Ambassador Oshima conveyed the Council's support to UNMEE staff and for the Mission as a whole and expressed concern about the current situation to the parties. I am grateful to him for agreeing to undertake this important mission.

6. On 23 November 2005, the Security Council adopted resolution 1640 (2005), by which it placed several important demands on the parties and requested the United Nations to monitor their compliance with the demands contained in paragraphs 1 and 2 of the resolution.

7. On 9 December 2005, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, sent me a letter, stating that the integrity of the Temporary Security Zone had been violated, thus creating a dangerous situation. The Government of Ethiopia nevertheless expressed its willingness to redeploy its forces "consistent with the instruction of paragraph 2 of Security Council resolution 1640 (2005)" notwithstanding the possibility that in so doing Ethiopia's security could be put at risk.

8. On 6 December 2005, the Government of Eritrea sent a letter to UNMEE requesting that its personnel "with nationalities from the United States of America, Canada and Europe, including the Russian Federation" leave the country within 10 days. As was the case with the helicopter ban, Eritrea gave no reason for this decision.

9. I am grateful to the Security Council for strongly condemning these unacceptable actions and restrictions imposed on UNMEE by Eritrea in its presidential statement of 14 December (S/PRST/2005/62). The statement further indicated the Council's agreement to temporarily redeploy certain UNMEE staff from Eritrea to Ethiopia and its intention to promptly review all options for UNMEE's deployment and functions. The Council stressed that it was making this decision only in the interest of the safety and security of UNMEE staff.

10. On 7 December, I issued a similar statement condemning the decision of Eritrea to request the withdrawal of some United Nations staff from the country and once again appealing to Asmara to reverse all restrictions imposed on UNMEE's operations. Eritrea's demand contravenes its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations to respect the exclusively international character of United Nations staff, which is a fundamental principle of United Nations peacekeeping.

11. At my request, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno, accompanied by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations military adviser, Lieutenant-General Randhir Kumar Mehta, visited the region to meet with the parties, the diplomatic community and UNMEE personnel at all levels in order to discuss the present situation and assess how to move the overall peace process forward. Although Mr. Guéhenno was able to meet with Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia, no senior Eritrean Government official agreed to receive him, nor did the Eritrean authorities respond to the two letters sent by Mr. Guéhenno, reminding the Government of Eritrea of its obligations and urging it to reconsider its damaging decision to request the withdrawal of certain UNMEE staff as well as the other unacceptable restrictions it had imposed. The Government of Eritrea did not respond to my own calls to rescind the decision.

12. In accordance with the agreement of the Security Council, on 15 and 16 December UNMEE temporarily redeployed 77 UNMEE civilian staff and 61 military personnel from Eritrea to Ethiopia. Those redeployed included both staff of the nationalities listed in the Eritrean letter of 6 December as well as staff of other nationalities who could no longer effectively perform their functions in Asmara because of the overall restrictions Eritrea had imposed on the Mission.

III. Implementation of Security Council resolution 1640 (2005)

13. During the meeting of the Military Coordination Commission, held on 25 November in Nairobi, UNMEE discussed with the parties the demands contained in Security Council resolution 1640 (2005), in particular, those related to the lifting of all restrictions imposed on the Mission's operations and the need to show maximum restraint and to return to the pre-16 December 2004 levels of deployment within 30 days. UNMEE also drew the attention of the parties to other demands contained in this important resolution. While the Ethiopian delegation agreed to carry out the redeployment of troops, the Eritrean delegation argued that the provision concerning the redeployment did not apply to Eritrea, as it had not moved

any troops forward. The Eritrean authorities maintained that any additional armed personnel in the Temporary Security Zone were militia engaged in agricultural activities. Both sides reiterated their earlier positions on the causes of the stalemate in the peace process and its implications and reaffirmed their commitment to the non-resumption of hostilities.

Ethiopia

14. On 27 November 2005, the Ethiopian authorities presented to UNMEE a plan for the redeployment of their forces to the pre-16 December 2004 levels of deployment. UNMEE verified the Ethiopian plan against its own records and developed a detailed monitoring and verification programme.

15. Pursuant to the monitoring and verification programme, UNMEE teams obtained details of the deployment of the Ethiopian troops that were expected to be pulled back and ascertained both their presence at the forward positions and the schedules for their redeployment. UNMEE patrols then confirmed the departure of the Ethiopian military personnel and equipment from these forward positions and, where possible, their arrival at the designated pre-16 December 2004 locations. Finally, the Mission's teams verified each of the vacated locations to reconfirm that they had not been reoccupied by Ethiopia. Throughout this exercise UNMEE military observers maintained close coordination with the Ethiopian authorities. On 23 December, UNMEE confirmed that Ethiopia had completed the planned withdrawal of eight of its divisions from the forward positions.

16. As required by resolution 1640 (2005), the force levels of the Ethiopian Armed Forces that remained close to the southern boundary of the Temporary Security Zone and in the adjacent areas generally conform to those that prevailed previous to 16 December 2004. Most of the Ethiopian forces presently deployed in the border area appear to have a defensive posture. To acquire any large-scale offensive capability, Ethiopia would need to bring forces back much closer to the southern boundary of the Zone.

17. On 23 December, I received a copy of a note from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia, Mr. Seyoum Mesfin, addressed to the President of the Security Council with regard to, inter alia, the implementation by Ethiopia of resolution 1640 (2005), stating that Ethiopia had responded "receptively" to the resolution, agreeing to reposition its troops away from the border. The note further stated that Ethiopia would continue to refrain from initiating any armed hostilities and would work to resolve its differences with Eritrea peacefully, although "the range of possibilities open to Ethiopia" was "limited" until Eritrea demonstrated a willingness to resolve disputes through peaceful means, including normal diplomatic dialogue.

Eritrea

18. As indicated above, despite various appeals, the Government of Eritrea has not reversed its ban on UNMEE helicopter flights, as demanded by resolution 1640 (2005), as well as additional restrictions imposed on the operations of UNMEE and has not provided the Mission with the access, support and protection required for the performance of its duties. The imposition of the restrictions on the freedom of movement of UNMEE personnel has continued without any sign of abating. Moreover, since the adoption of the resolution, Eritrea has put in place additional restrictions, in particular inside the Temporary Security Zone. Every day, UNMEE

faces at least 10 to 12 instances of restrictions on its freedom of movement, including denials of access to areas of Eritrean deployment inside the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas. In large areas in Sector West and Sector Centre, UNMEE ground patrols have been restricted to the main roads and are not allowed to move at night. In addition, the patrols have been prevented from monitoring certain areas. Challenge inspections by the Mission continue to be blocked by the Eritrean militia at a number of locations. Finally, the closure of the main road from Asmara to Barentu, via Keren, which is the most viable supply route to UNMEE troops in Sector West, is a major impediment to the operations of the Mission, particularly in the light of the existing ban on helicopter flights.

19. As noted above, the Eritrean authorities have indicated that, in their view, the demand for the redeployment of the troops to 16 December 2004 deployment levels does not apply to them. While UNMEE's observation capacity is impaired by the restrictions imposed by Eritrea on its freedom of movement, the Mission has reported that the Government of Eritrea has taken no visible steps that would indicate a redeployment in compliance with resolution 1640 (2005).

20. In this context, UNMEE has also observed vacant military locations in the areas adjacent to the Temporary Security Zone from which troops have presumably moved to a destination yet undetermined by the Mission. At the same time, UNMEE reports armed Eritrean personnel in numbers ranging from 80 to 150 per location at a total of 15 to 17 locations inside the Zone. Some of these personnel claim to be militia, although they refuse to present their identity cards, raising suspicion that at least some of them could be regular Eritrean troops. In the meantime, the Government of Eritrea insists that it has not deployed soldiers inside the Zone, that there are only some additional militia, who are carrying out agricultural activities. While the Mission's monitoring capacity has been limited, there is no evidence of the presence of tanks or artillery or any large-scale troop concentrations inside the Zone.

IV. Status of the Mission and related issues

21. As of 26 December 2005, the total strength of the UNMEE military component stood at 3,332, comprising 3,048 troops, 83 headquarters staff and 201 military observers (see annex II).

22. Despite various restrictions and other difficulties, the Mission continues, to the extent possible, to carry out its major monitoring and verification functions by launching an average of over 100 patrols per day, in addition to maintaining dozens of stationary checkpoints. The Mission actively liaises with the parties, including the military authorities on the ground, and interacts with military authorities in the capitals. It should be mentioned that UNMEE access to high-level authorities in Asmara remains very limited.

23. I regret to report that no progress has been made on the issue of the direct flight route between Asmara and Addis Ababa. I once again appeal to the Government of Eritrea to address this important issue as a matter of urgency.

V. Boundary Commission

24. As indicated in my previous report, the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission has suspended its activities in the area (see annex I). Accordingly, there has been no further demarcation activity.

VI. Options for the future deployment of the Mission

25. In its presidential statement adopted on 14 December (S/PRST/2005/62), the Security Council emphasized its intention to review promptly all options for UNMEE's deployment and functions in the context of its original purpose, its capacity to act effectively and the different military options available. In my view, the following principles should be considered as fundamental to any decision regarding the future of UNMEE:

(a) Full compliance with the Algiers Agreements and the decision of the Boundary Commission, as cornerstones for the peaceful resolution of the conflict, as well as resumption of dialogue between the parties;

(b) Consent and full cooperation of the parties with UNMEE, including unrestricted freedom of movement, allowing the Mission to perform its functions without any hindrance;

(c) Respect for the exclusively international nature of the Mission, which is a fundamental principle of United Nations peacekeeping;

(d) Separation of forces of both parties, thereby creating a conducive environment for the continuation of the peace process;

(e) Prevention of any escalation of conflict;

(f) Readiness of troop-contributing countries to participate in the Mission and guarantees for the safety and security of all their personnel;

(g) Maintenance of effective, high-level communication channels between the parties themselves and between UNMEE and the parties.

26. With these principles in mind, I propose, for the consideration of the Security Council, the following options for the immediate future of UNMEE, some of which may require a new mandate. Each has its positive and negative aspects and some do not respect the principles enunciated fully. They will have to be compared and assessed.

27. The first option would be to maintain the present UNMEE configuration on the ground. This would allow the Mission to continue its current presence and to perform its mandated tasks to the extent possible, under the current restrictions. The present configuration may be the best option for continuing, as much as feasible, the separation of forces as UNMEE would retain its presence inside the Temporary Security Zone, albeit with a much degraded monitoring capacity. Though reduced, this presence could buy time for diplomatic initiatives to unblock the current dangerous stalemate. However, to maintain the status quo with regard to many restrictions that have accumulated over the years would be to acquiesce to Eritrea's unacceptable demands, including for the removal of certain United Nations staff. To do so may set an undesirable precedent and could lead to more unjustifiable

restrictions. In the light of the existing helicopter ban, this option also poses serious safety concerns for UNMEE personnel.

28. Under the second option, UNMEE's configuration would be adjusted further by relocating the entire UNMEE headquarters and units integral to it from Asmara to Addis Ababa, leaving only a small liaison office in the Eritrean capital. Some of the military units currently stationed in Asmara, including the guard and administrative company, the force reserve company, level II hospital and the military helicopter unit, would be relocated to the adjacent areas, south of the current Temporary Security Zone. However, the United Nations troops currently stationed in the Zone would remain in place, subject obviously to Eritrea's cooperation. This option would drastically reduce the Mission's presence in Asmara and would thus minimize the impact of various arbitrary restrictions imposed by the Government of Eritrea over the years. At the same time, this option would leave the Mission objectives essentially intact and better positioned to fulfil its mandate than at present. However, the option does present serious logistical challenges and UNMEE may still be subject to further Eritrean restrictions, especially in the Zone.

29. The third option would involve UNMEE's transformation into an observer mission, either on both sides of the Temporary Security Zone or exclusively on the Ethiopian side. Such an observer mission would uphold the principle of the Zone but would have limited monitoring and conflict prevention capabilities. Deploying observers exclusively on the Ethiopian side would still provide some means for conflict prevention, while ensuring relative safety and security for United Nations personnel, subject to Ethiopia's cooperation. Addis Ababa would have to agree to the implementation of any option located exclusively on its side. Moreover, if located only on the Ethiopian side of the Zone, UNMEE might need a new mandate and would not be able to monitor the military situation on the Eritrean side of the Zone, nor would there be any guarantee that the integrity of the Zone would hold.

30. Under the fourth option, a preventive force would be deployed in strength entirely south of the Temporary Security Zone currently held by Ethiopia. The deployment of such a force could assist in the prevention of hostilities through its presence and would ensure the safety of United Nations personnel. However, just as with the option with an observer mission on one side, the proposed preventive force could not guarantee the integrity of the Zone. In addition, this option would ensure separation of military forces only if Ethiopia were to permanently withdraw its forces from forward positions; otherwise the risk of a resumption of hostilities would remain high.

31. In the fifth option, UNMEE could be downgraded to a liaison mission maintaining a small office in each capital, while pursuing efforts towards a political solution, in accordance with the Algiers Agreement and the decision of the Boundary Commission. Accordingly, a limited number of political, military and other liaison officers would remain in Asmara and Addis Ababa, headed by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. If allowed by the parties, UNMEE would also maintain forward liaison presence, for example in Barentu, on the Eritrean side, and in Adigrat, in Ethiopia. The possible risk of violations of the Temporary Security Zone would remain high and could lead to serious consequences. As in any option involving United Nations deployment in Eritrea, even a small mission could face severe operational restrictions.

32. Finally, UNMEE could be withdrawn entirely. It should be recalled that the Algiers Agreement of 12 December 2000 stipulates that the "parties shall permanently terminate military hostilities between themselves" and that each party "shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the other". As agreed by the parties, the United Nations could assist them by providing political support to the peace process from outside the region.

33. None of these options is perfect. Any decision made by the Security Council would need to take into account the objective reality on the ground, the attitude of the parties and the level of the commitment of the international community to the implementation of the Algiers Agreements. In this regard, the Council may wish to consider whether UNMEE's current situation has reached the point at which one party is, at least partially, withdrawing its cooperation with the Mission. If it is indeed so, the choices may be limited to those where at least minimum cooperation on the ground can be assured and where the future United Nations presence could help disengage troops, prevent a resumption of hostilities and create the much needed space for the full implementation of the Algiers Agreement and dialogue between the parties.

VII. Mine action

34. The Mission suspended all demining activities on 5 October 2005, following Eritrea's ban on UNMEE helicopter flights, which are critical for casualty evacuation procedures for any deminers. However, following the implementation of alternative casualty evacuation (casevac) procedures, sound demining operations recommenced in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas on 14 November 2005.

35. Consistent with the Mission's mandate, from September to the end of December 2005, the UNMEE demining units, working together with the commercial contractors on route clearance and other demining operations, destroyed 110 pieces of unexploded ordnance, in addition to clearing 130,477 square metres of land and 70 kilometres of road. There were two incidents involving newly laid anti-tank mines that struck vehicles inside the Temporary Security Zone and an adjacent area on the Ethiopian side. Both incidents occurred in Sector West, killing a total of five persons and injuring 22, most of them seriously. The UNMEE Mine Action Coordination Centre continues to closely monitor the threat of landmines and unexploded ordnance in all Sectors.

36. The Kenyan military demining element also continued to train and work with commercial contractors to implement an integrated approach to mine clearing operations inside the Temporary Security Zone. In accordance with the developed priorities, the UNMEE Mine Action Coordination Centre focused its community-based outreach activities on internally displaced persons returning to the Shilalo region in Sector West and on newly resettled internally displaced persons near Tsorena in Sector Centre, providing mine risk education to over 5,000 people.

VIII. Human rights

37. During the reporting period, UNMEE continued to monitor cross-border human rights-related incidents, including alleged abductions and cases of missing persons from Ethiopia and Eritrea, as well as cattle-rustling.

38. In particular, UNMEE monitored the repatriation, conducted under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross, of a total number of 520 persons of Ethiopian origin from Eritrea and 15 persons of Eritrean origin from Ethiopia. Reports indicate that persons of Ethiopian origin continue to face discriminatory practices in Eritrea, including the demand for payment of high "repatriation clearance fees". At the same time, cases of temporary detentions in Ethiopia of persons of Eritrean origin pending their repatriation are also reported. I would like to reiterate my strong appeal to both parties to ensure that the repatriations remain voluntary and that they are carried out in a proper and dignified manner.

39. Approximately 113,000 internally displaced persons currently live in the border areas of Eritrea in either makeshift settlement camps or with host communities. These persons face a dire need of food, water, health care, shelter, education and other basic amenities. I call on both Governments and the international community to assist the return of these persons to their places of origin. I also appeal to the Government of Eritrea to facilitate the work of the international relief agencies in the Mission area, which thus far has been restricted by Asmara. Simultaneously, UNMEE continues to monitor conditions in the Shimelba refugee camp in northern Ethiopia. As of late December 2005, some 10,000 persons were residing in the camp, which was receiving a decreased monthly inflow of new refugees. The Ethiopian authorities have suggested establishing a new camp, since the existing capacity of the Shimelba refugee camp has been reached.

IX. Public information

40. UNMEE public information activities continued through the broadcast of radio programmes, the conduct of weekly press briefings, video productions, the issuance of monthly newsletters and the work of outreach centres.

41. Over the last few months, UNMEE completed an audience survey on the effectiveness of the UNMEE radio programme in Eritrea. The outcome of the survey indicated that slightly more than half the population (52.4 per cent) in the country listen regularly to the weekly United Nations programme. In Ethiopia, the Mission is currently reviewing the efficiency of using short-wave radio as a medium to reach people in the border areas.

42. In the meantime, visits to the UNMEE outreach centre in Addis Ababa declined sharply owing to the disturbances that took place in the Ethiopian capital and in other parts of the country in November 2005, although it received an upsurge in telephone calls as people sought information on the situation, particularly with regard to the possibility of resumption of hostilities between Ethiopia and Eritrea. In contrast, the outreach centres in Adigrat and Mekelle remain important sources of information for the local communities.

X. Humanitarian developments

43. In Eritrea, some 2 million people, many of whom already chronically undernourished, are facing varying degrees of food shortages with an estimated 1.3 million considered to be in need of food assistance. The Government's rejection of the Consolidated Appeal and the World Food Programme (WFP)/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) food and crop assessment reflects its recent policy thrust of self-reliance and its shift towards more food-for-work programmes. In this connection, the Government has embarked on a very ambitious undertaking to assess food aid needs at the household level. The assessment is expected to identify those in need of direct relief assistance and those able to work for food as a means of promoting self-reliance through asset creation. In the meantime, the Government has suspended most general food distributions since September 2005 until it obtains a clear picture of these needs. Consequently, only 72,000 internally displaced persons and other vulnerable groups are currently receiving general rations compared to some 1.3 million people in August 2005. Although the 2005 harvest prospects are expected to be favourable, there are concerns that it may not meet all the cereal requirements of the population. To respond to the Government's concerns, WFP is currently considering the gradual reorientation of its operations towards more labour-intensive and sustainable productive activities using food-for-work as a vehicle for food distribution.

44. The overall response to the 2005 United Nations Consolidated Appeal for Eritrea stands at 62.9 per cent of the required $156.4 million, with food being funded at 70 per cent and non-food items at 43 per cent of the requirements. The water, sanitation and health sectors of the country have made slow progress, despite the ongoing construction of water treatment plants/wells and successful vaccination campaigns. The provision of clean water, radical improvement in health services, hygiene and sanitation, extensive mine action and demobilization of thousands of soldiers are some of the issues that could bring about significant change in malnutrition rates and the overall humanitarian conditions in Eritrea.

45. In Ethiopia, a recent mid-season multi-agency food security assessment revealed that food security had improved in many parts of the country, with the exception of the northern zones of Afar and the lowlands of Oromiya regions. The total relief food requirements from September to December 2005 are estimated at 143,483 metric tons. About 200,000 tons of food are available for distribution, of which approximately 60,000 tons could cover food needs in the early months of 2006 when requirements in the pastoral areas may peak. As in Eritrea, the scaling down of military expenditures and a refocusing of economic priorities could significantly improve the humanitarian climate in Ethiopia.

46. The recovery programme operated by the United Nations country team, which aims at repatriating and reintegrating 6,000 internally displaced persons from the Hartisheik and Fafen camps to their places of origin in Somali Region, started in October 2005. Thus far, a total of 1,491 people have been moved.

47. UNMEE continued to implement quick-impact projects in the Temporary Security Zone and adjacent areas, in both Ethiopia and Eritrea, from funds received through the Trust Fund to Support the Peace Process in Ethiopia and Eritrea. I encourage donors to continue lending support to these important, small-scale projects by making additional contributions to the Trust Fund.

XI. Conduct of United Nations personnel

48. UNMEE conducted its first basic training module on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse from July to September 2005, during which a total of 588 United Nations civilian and military staff, in addition to contingent personnel referred to in the previous report, received training on the subject. Mandatory training in prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse has now been incorporated into the Mission's induction training for all civilian and military staff. HIV/AIDS, gender, human rights, code of conduct and cultural awareness have similarly been incorporated into the induction training.

XII. HIV/AIDS activities

49. The UNMEE HIV/AIDS unit continued with induction training and voluntary counselling and testing services for newly arrived personnel. It also conducted a training of the trainers course that is intended to increase its outreach activities among the local population. The course was designed primarily for uniformed personnel from contingents. Those individuals who have completed training are currently engaged in cascade training activities in their respective contingents. The unit carried out activities that include collaboration with community-based groups, which, after a needs assessment, led to the development of low cost community-based project proposals for HIV/AIDS prevention and collaboration with the United Nations country teams.

XIII. Observations

50. Despite the efforts of the international community, the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea remains a source of deep concern. As mentioned above, the latest considerable deterioration of the situation is a result of several factors: the protracted stalemate caused by Ethiopia's non-compliance with the implementation of the decision of the Boundary Commission; lack of any dialogue between Ethiopia and Eritrea, which is long overdue; the dangerous escalation of tensions, including forward movement of troops and heightened military activity in and around the Temporary Security Zone; and finally, the exacerbation of the situation caused by the restrictions imposed by Eritrea on UNMEE, including most recently, the helicopter ban and the arbitrary demand to remove UNMEE staff of certain nationalities.

51. While I welcome the redeployment by Ethiopia of its forces to the levels of 16 December 2004, I note with regret the non-compliance with operative paragraph 5 of resolution 1640 (2005) with regard to the acceptance of the decision of the Boundary Commission and the need to take immediate concrete steps to enable the Commission to demarcate the border. Full compliance with this paragraph is key to resolving the existing stalemate.

52. Eritrea's lack of cooperation with UNMEE and the arbitrary restrictions placed on it are particularly worrying since the Mission was established at the request of Ethiopia and Eritrea, pursuant to the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities of 18 June 2000, which both parties entered into voluntarily. By that Agreement, the parties undertook to invite the United Nations to perform vital monitoring functions.

It is therefore paradoxical that, from the outset, the Eritrean authorities introduced numerous operational and administrative restrictions on the Mission, culminating in the situation created in October and November 2005, when UNMEE's effectiveness was deliberately and severely undermined. I would like, once again, to put on record that these restrictions are unacceptable and in contravention to the Charter of the United Nations and established peacekeeping practices. I decided to redeploy some of the UNMEE staff from Eritrea solely in the interest of the effectiveness of the Mission's operations as well as of the safety and security of personnel. Eritrea's actions give rise to the issue of the future of this important peacekeeping operation and, on a broader scale, the implementation of the Algiers Agreement. They also have major implications for the maintenance of peace and security in this region of Africa.

53. In my previous report, I noted that the existing stalemate regarding the implementation of the Algiers Agreements continues to be a major destabilizing factor in the peace process. I renew my appeal to the witnesses to the Algiers Agreement of 12 December 2000, especially those with influence on the parties, to assist the two countries urgently to resolve their differences. In this regard, I am exploring the possibility of convening a meeting of the witnesses to determine a way forward. The Security Council should also keep under consideration the possibility of a mission to Ethiopia and Eritrea, to be undertaken at an appropriate time.

54. It is clear that dialogue between the two parties should resume without any precondition and in good faith, as a necessary ingredient in bringing the peace process to a successful conclusion. The international community should do everything possible to bring the parties together to engage in a constructive exchange aimed at normalizing bilateral relations.

55. It is a matter of concern that the very existence of UNMEE has become, through pressure and restrictions, part of the current predicament. Short of a commitment and full cooperation of the parties, not only the future of the Mission, but the continuation of the peace process could be put into question. This is a critical moment and the concerted efforts of all involved are needed to avert a further deterioration of the situation. Tension remains high and any miscalculation by the parties could result in a rapid escalation of the situation, with unpredictable consequences.

56. Urgent de-escalation and full implementation of resolution 1640 (2005) is therefore required. I have noted the redeployment of the Ethiopian Armed Forces to the 16 December 2004 levels. In this regard, I deeply regret that the Eritrean authorities did not avail themselves of the extended presence in Asmara of Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno in order to unblock the situation and move the peace process forward.

57. As a result of the restrictions imposed on UNMEE, the present position of the Mission is becoming increasingly untenable. The time may be fast approaching to take difficult decisions on the future of the Mission. To this end, the Security Council may wish to consider the options outlined above.

58. As was mentioned earlier, none of the options is perfect. At a minimum, it is important that any option selected contribute to the prevention of the resumption of hostilities, while allowing the parties to conclude the implementation of the Algiers

Agreements. The Security Council may also wish to consider imposing deadlines for the implementation of the demands contained in its resolutions. With regard to the restrictions imposed on UNMEE, unless they are all lifted expeditiously, I will be obliged to make recommendations to the Council concerning force deployment on the ground by the end of January 2006.

59. I would like to take this opportunity to pay particular tribute to the troop-contributing countries for their continued support to United Nations peacekeeping operations, often conducted in the most difficult circumstances, such as those currently prevailing at UNMEE. Members of the contingents currently serving with UNMEE deserve our deep appreciation for their perseverance and their continued professionalism with regard to the task at hand.

60. In conclusion, I wish to express my gratitude to my Special Representative, Legwaila Joseph Legwaila, and to the UNMEE civilian and military personnel for their continued commitment and hard work, especially in this time of crisis. I was heartened to learn from Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno, following his visit to the Mission, that despite the difficulties they face, the morale of staff and their willingness to contribute to UNMEE remains high. I would further like to thank all the Mission's partners, including the United Nations country teams and humanitarian agencies, the Member States involved, the African Union and other international organizations for the support they continue to lend to this important peace process.

Annex I

Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission

Nineteenth report on the work of the Commission

1. This is the nineteenth report of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, covering the period from 1 September to 30 November 2005.

2. The Commission regrets to report that there has been no change in the situation since its previous report of 31 August 2005.

(*Signed*) Sir Elihu **Lauterpacht**
President of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission

5 December 2005

Annex II

United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea: military contributions as of 28 December 2005

Country	*Military Observers*	*Troops*	*Staff*	*Total*	*National support elements*
Algeria	1		1	2	
Austria	2		1	3	
Bangladesh	5	168	6	179	
Bosnia and Herzegovina	9			9	
Bulgaria	5		2	7	
China	7			7	
Croatia	7			7	
Czech Republic	2			2	
Denmark	4			4	
Finland	7			7	
France			1	1	
Gambia	4		2	6	
Germany	2			2	
Ghana	9		4	13	
Greece	3			3	
Guatemala	3			3	
India	8	1 581	23	1 612	
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	3			3	
Jordan	7	951	12	970	
Kenya	9	315	7	331	
Malaysia	4		3	7	
Namibia	4		3	7	
Nepal	5			5	
Nigeria	7		3	10	
Norway	5			5	
Paraguay	4			4	
Peru	4			4	
Poland	4			4	
Romania	7			7	
Russian Federation	6			6	
South Africa	5			5	
Spain	3		1	4	
Sweden	5			5	
Switzerland	3			3	
Tunisia	4		4	8	

Country	*Military Observers*	*Troops*	*Staff*	*Total*	*National support elements*
Ukraine	5			5	
United Republic of Tanzania	7		3	10	
United States of America	7			7	
Uruguay	5	33	3	41	
Zambia	10		4	14	
Total	**201**	**3 048**	**83**	**3 332**	**0**